

COMMUNIQUÉ

MARINE NATIONAL FACILITY STEERING COMMITTEE FREQUENCY OF CALL FOR APPLICATIONS FOR SEA TIME

With the increased capacity and capability brought to the Marine National Facility by *Investigator*, demand for sea time by the Australian marine research community and their international collaborators has risen to unprecedented highs. At the 76th meeting of the Marine National Facility Steering Committee (MNFSC) in February 2015, the Committee considered a range of options for the MNF applications process to maximise the utility of the MNF voyage schedule. This included canvassing options such as amending the frequency of calls for sea time applications, for example, by maintaining an annual call for single year Primary and Supplementary applications, while only calling for multi-year Primary applications on a triennial basis. In considering options, it was agreed the MNF would develop a position paper to form the basis for a period of consultation with the Australian marine scientific community, prior to a final decision being made.

On 1 May 2015 the MNF released via their website a consultation paper outlining these options and calling for feedback from stakeholders. This process ran for two weeks closing on 14 May 2015. To ensure that MNF stakeholders were aware of this consultation it was advertised through the MNF Blog and emailed directly to key stakeholders. In response to the community consultation process, 15 submissions were received from past, current and potential users of the MNF. These responses spanned nine individual Australian research institutions, thus providing a good cross-section of the MNF user base.

Of the two options presented, Option 2 (calling for single year Primary applications annually and multi-year Primary applications every three years) was the preferred option. In September 2015, Steering Committee ratified their decision to update the process by which calls for applications for sea time are made according to the preferred option.

Furthermore, the MNF has also commenced discussions with the Australian Research Council (ARC) to explore options for aligning the two application processes. As a first step, the MNF will amend the timetable for future calls for applications

for sea time to ensure that future MNF voyage schedules will be announced prior to the deadline for ARC Discovery rejoinders to be submitted. In light of the two points outlined above, the future MNF applications timetable is planned as follows:

When	Event
Jun 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2017/18 voyage schedule announced prior to ARC rejoinder due date.
Jun 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call for single-year Primary applications for 2018/19.
Mar 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call for Supplementary applications for 2018/19.
Jun 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2018/19 voyage schedule announced prior to ARC rejoinder due date.
Jun 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call for single-year Primary applications for 2019/20.
Mar 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call for Supplementary applications for 2019/20.
Jun 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2019/20 voyage schedule announced prior to ARC rejoinder due date
Jun 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call for single-year Primary applications for 2020/21. Call for multi-year Primary applications for 2020/21 to 2022/23.

In considering stakeholder feedback, the MNFSC noted several other suggested improvements to the existing applications process. These suggestions will be considered at future SC meetings and reported via SC Communique.

On behalf of the MNFSC I would like to thank all those who took the time to provide comment and input into this consultation process.

Ian Poiner
Chair MNFSC